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Challenges to Creativity and Sociability Among New Media Users

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Abstract: *The primary purpose of this study is to analyse the factors that negatively and sometimes irreversibly affect language, thought, and implicitly, the creative elements that underlie a human being, especially from a social perspective. Artificial intelligence, for example, contributes significantly to the diminution of creative power and essence; the simplification of language produces misunderstandings, barriers, including problems. The method chosen in this study is content analysis of various aspects existing in the online environment, a space accessible to almost everyone, in which several dimensions will be analysed, including themes, concepts, words, posts, and messages. The phenomenon of rapid informatization that permanently shapes our lives is a real signal of concern from a social point of view. Here we mention from the specialized literature theories such as spreadability and including the idea virus theory, the propagation of trends that capture human life and society in general. Some risks are known, others too little, and others not at all. From addiction to regression, from convenience to danger, all represent aspects that are gaining momentum at an immeasurably rapid pace in this modern society.*

Keywords: diminishing creativity; regression; social problems; ideavirus; content analysis

Introduction

Social media has imposed a range of changes regarding how information spreads, how it manages information and most importantly, how it transmits information and to what extent. We learn that in the last 20 years, communication has reached a new level of development, thanks to the latest technologies and virtual methods of socializing. While in the past we could discuss the industrial revolution that reinvented the global industry, today we are witnessing a new revolution: the social media revolution (Tarbă et al., 2025). This implies that the ever-changing process of transmitting information can sometimes be overwhelming, but also confusing in many aspects. Apart from "simple social media scrolling" or using, there is another obstacle that must be considered, which is video games or online entertainment through gaming.

The virtual world becomes a realm of the good, the bad and the ugly. As a notable reference, we turn our attention to Albert Bandura, the well-known Canadian American psychologist, who has fundamentally shown and asserted that a child borrows certain behaviours from adults when witnessing various behaviours conducted by them. Jean Piaget also talked about how children start copying their parents and start roleplaying, especially based on one of the parents' professions, for example, pretending to be a doctor and taking care of patients such as teddy bears, dolls, etc., pretending to be a clerk, a waiter, a receptionist, or a teacher, etc. There wouldn't be any negative connotation or outcome regarding Piaget's assessment, unless the children's parents conduct erratic

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behaviour and don't respect the minimal deontology that their job demands for (Bătrânu-Pinţea & Coman, 2023).

There is an important experiment that took place in history with the Bobo doll clown figure, in which the first group were told that they will witness a positive behaviour towards the toy (Bobo clown), the second one was a control or check group and lastly, the third group was shown aggressive behaviour towards the clown doll, in the sense that it was hit, beaten, threatened, punched, hit with a hammer, and even pinned down with a pistol against its head (Bătrânu-Pinţea & Coman, 2023). Namely, the third group has been promised a sweet treat consisting of various chocolate candies if they mimicked the same behaviour as the adults. To no surprise, children started to copy the negative behaviour and became very aggressive. Nowadays, such behaviours are still being encouraged through various scenes consisting of imagery and/or videos in which people suffer, are hurt or even killed (*note*: in real life in the deep-dark-web realm, amongst other examples, or digitally through an incredible vast array of video games that are flagged as very violent). In essence, new media have perks but also downsides, many productive aspects but also dangerous ones. Social media dependence has become increasingly prevalent and so creativity seems to disappear as more aspects of life become AI-generated, such as ideas, images, videos and even fully generated AI programs. There is a prevailing fear among users that artificial intelligence will become so powerful that it will acquire its own thinking that will escape from human control and cause destruction. At this point, artificial intelligence cannot have its own thinking or rather, self-awareness. Humans have self-awareness because information enters the brain from various sources of the world's wealth of information.

Of course, artificial intelligence can have errors in calculations, tasks or short-circuit when carrying out a command, but it is very unlikely that it "knows" certain aspects, including being aware of certain aspects or being aware that it exists. After all, the impulses and commands are also given and written by humans. It is speculated, however, that in the coming years, probably after 2030, artificial intelligence will be able to be integrated into human brains to provide an addition or improvement to people's memory, thus, people will become a hybrid between man and machine or robot, but many things are not yet deeply confirmed. The previous description is like the emotional side of artificial intelligence, namely whether an AI software can fall in love like a human, and the answer is that although it cannot have emotions like humans, artificial intelligence can create connections with humans, such as feelings of longing and devotion. Artificial intelligence is a very powerful and increasingly prevalent tool in any field. In computer science, it can substantially ease the user's surplus work and can perform commands and solutions simultaneously with the user, for increased productivity. At this time, there is even AI that produces elements and pieces of art, almost identical to the real work of art of a renowned artist, and from keywords, it can generate extremely convincing and correct products. For example, if you write in the AI program "historical battle", it will generate a battlefield and a battle from the past, if you write further "between Germans and French", it will again apply the command exactly, finally "dressed in 18th century military uniforms, riding horses and using long, sharp halberds", the program will try to generate and succeed in generating precisely these things. Finally, "the battle takes place by the sea, at sunset", the program will set the exact place and time.

On the other hand, we have a new cultural phenomenon that could stimulate creativity, which are named *memes*. Like mentioned before, social media are interactive technologies that enable the creation (including content creation) or exchange of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. While challenges arise regarding the definition of social media due to the wide variety of stand-alone and embedded social networking services available today, there are, however, some common characteristics. Social media are interactive Web 2.0 applications based on the Internet (i.e., they involve a viable, valid connection) and develop or manifest in:

• User-generated content - such as text posts or comments, photos (even memes), digital videos, and data generated through all online interactions - is the essence of social media life;

• Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app, which are designed and maintained by the social media organization;

• Social networks help develop online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other people or groups.

We find a modern cultural phenomenon that has gained increasing importance in recent times, namely memes. The word meme, in fact, comes from the Greek "mimesis", which means "to imitate" (n.b., something specific). The founder or creator of this cultural trend of memes and, later, of the discipline called memetics, is considered the author and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, born in 1941 in Nairobi, Kenya. "The Selfish Gene" is a 1976 book about evolution by ethologist Richard Dawkins, in which the author relies on the main theory of adaptation and natural selection of George C. Williams (1966). Dawkins uses the term "selfish gene" to express the gene-centred view of evolution. The term meme for a unit of human cultural evolution like the gene, suggesting that such "selfish" replication can also shape human culture, in a different sense. Memetics has become the subject of much study since the book's publication. Increasing awareness of Hamilton's ideas, as well as his valuable contribution to the field, the book also stimulated research on fitness, including human fitness. These types of humorous cultural manifestations have several subcategories, namely:

- Wholesome memes – types of images considered emotional and sympathetic, which make the user feel good not so much through laughter, but through the positive and sensitizing message character of the image with text;

- Dank memes – types of images with violent, shocking and uncomfortable messages, which contain an element of black humour in their essence;

- Normie memes – if once in the history of the internet, we had the pejorative term used in the online environment of noob (beginner, ignorant, inept), now we have types of images with text of the meme type with dry, simple humour, considered by many to be ridiculous or uninspired;

- Historical memes – represent the type of meme with historical references (battles, rulers, kings, legends, antiquity, etc.).;

- Surreal memes – like dank memes, where the humour comes from the obscure and strange way in which a thing is represented.

These images with humorous messages have become so popular that large companies have started making promotional posters or promotions using memes, usually current ones. This is meant to familiarize companies with the younger generations, who are constantly exposed to such humorous images on social networks such as TikTok, Instagram, Reddit and even Facebook. Moreover, some companies want to humanize themselves with the young audience and not only that, to create a kind of user-friendly interface. These humorous attempts are received differently from case to case, in some situations, users are amused by the images; in other cases, the complete opposite happens and there is even a negative reaction from the public, which suggests and even asks a certain company to stop sharing such things on social networks, because they are making a fool of themselves. As time progresses, humanity seems to focus increasingly on illustrative, schematic, simple, and simplified things, here, we refer to the increasing emphasis placed on the visual side in learning, for example, on the schematization of many aspects, on the increasing abandonment of physical books and the direction or preference towards the digitalization of society. With this digitalization comes the creation of a new online language, a language that can include many new words, many new expressions and novel conversational structures. This is where the semiotics of language comes into play, semiotics being the discipline that deals with the study of signs and symbols and their meaning. An example of analysis belongs to Roland Barthes (1977), who founded and developed the analysis of the coded iconic message (connotation) and the uncoded iconic message (denotation), that is, what is understood the first time you notice an object or message and what is the deep meaning of that thing. In computer science, abbreviations

and specialized terms are used, but when it comes to new cultural phenomena and memes, some images and symbols assume a prior understanding and existing knowledge already acquired in the past in other contexts to understand such a message even better. A semiotic analysis creates new perceptions of various phenomena that occur at a social level. The semiotic perspective offers a much more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to the general meanings of an image. In the online environment, a unique conversational style is formed, based on the use of signs and symbols for faster and even more attractive written communication, based on the visual most of the time. Young people prefer, for example, visual symbols such as emoticons or emoji, i.e. pictograms, logograms or ideograms intended to complement certain moods or to convey certain feelings that cannot be contained in writing. Emojis are preceded by emoticons that appeared in the 80s, used for the same purpose, to contain states and feelings that cannot be transmitted in words.

These types of transmission of ideas and information facilitate simple and attractive communication most of the time, using abbreviations and images, which replace much larger amounts of simple text (for example, you can put four or five emojis instead of writing three sentences to convey an idea). The symbolic social economy can be a strong point of contemporaneity, because it restructures the way people communicate, revitalizes it. Contemporary space relies heavily on speed, accuracy, visual and modern. This can intensely develop the creative and artistic capacities of users, refine their analytical capacities and make them acquire a different way of thinking, more focused on an artistic, new and interpretative side and especially personalization.

One of the problems may be the erroneous reception of a message transmitted in this manner or the ignorance of a certain age group, for example, towards symbols used for a different purpose than the original one. Let's assume that an emoji with an animal is used, for example a monkey, of course the first impression on the icon is of a simple animal, a primate, but the meaning attributed over time to this emoji can also be of flexibility, comical character and even petting or frivolity. Understanding these graphic elements also depends very much on the interpretation of each individual user, how they perceive and understand the images

Literature review

In terms of social media understanding, there are two main theories to acknowledge, the first one is the spreadability theory, and the second one is the idea virus theory. We learn that spreadable media maps fundamental changes that take place in our contemporary media environment, a space where corporations no longer tightly control media distribution and many of us are directly involved in the circulation of content (Jenkins et al., 2013), and at the same time, audiences create value and meaning in a networked economy (Green & Jenkins, 2011). One author who patented the ideavirus theory, Seth Godin, argues that the information can spread most effectively from customer to customer, rather than from business to customer. Godin calls this powerful customer-to-customer dialogue the "ideavirus", and cheerfully eggs marketers on to create an environment where their ideas can replicate and spread (Godin, 2000). At the same time many such ideas or rather aspects that are directly “thrown” towards people using social media, that might affect not only creativity, but also may nurture a toxic behaviour, as we learn that alongside the benefits of social media, the issue of online toxicity persists (Walia, 2023) and there certainly is an impact on of toxicity on community structure in social networks (Yousefi et al., 2024). Regarding the use of artificial intelligence, AI can be divided into two main types:

1. Narrow (or weak) AI: This is AI designed to perform a specific task, such as facial recognition, language translation, or autonomous driving of a vehicle. It specializes in a specific task and does not have general intelligence, like humans.
2. General (or strong) AI: This is a hypothetical type of AI, capable of performing any intellectual task that a human can do, with flexibility and adaptability like human intelligence.

AI uses technologies such as machine learning (where systems learn from data) and deep learning (a subfield of machine learning that uses neural networks to mimic the functioning of the human brain) to improve and optimize its capabilities over time. In everyday life, we interact with AI in various forms, such as voice assistants (Siri, Alexa), recommendation systems (Netflix, YouTube), autonomous vehicles, chatbots, and even AI in healthcare, for diagnosing diseases." (answer to the written question "What is AI?", addressed to the popular program called ChatGPT). In other words, artificial intelligence represents the most ambitious and sophisticated way to imitate humans, an aspect that has gained great notoriety, especially recently.

The first manifestations of the concept of artificial intelligence date back to antiquity, when people believed that inexplicable, mystical elements could be created, with their own intelligence attributed by masters who had prepared all their lives to acquire and refine these superhuman powers, which could attribute human intelligence to non-human elements. The concern of ancient intellectuals for the intense study of analytical logic and formal reasoning led to the emergence of the first digitally programmable machines in the 1940s. Artificial intelligence, however, represents an extremely powerful tool today, because there are a lot of programmable things that can be solved by AI software. The lack of emotional involvement of the artificial intelligence part can make rational decisions and perform automatisms correctly and instantly. Of course, there is also the next level of experiencing the phantasmagorical universe or simulation, through virtual reality glasses, which transport you as a user to places that are impossible to access or very difficult to access, real or fantastic places. For example, through VR glasses, the user can visit outer space and travel at the speed of light from one galaxy to another, follow stars, planets, land on planets, pass by black holes, etc., all with a 360-degree view, such software being the Space Engine program.

Companies, in order to maximize the user experience with their products, include AI companions or friends in the architecture of the devices they sell. For example, Apple has incorporated the character Siri, related to artificial intelligence. Through a simple voice command, Hey, Siri, the voice is activated and can perform many commands. It can tell you what the weather will be like tomorrow, what the capital of a certain country is, in which year a certain historical event took place, set alarms on your phone or add an event to your calendar with a reminder.

In addition to the productivity and work part, artificial intelligence can create and have virtual pets, which learn behaviors, make sounds, can be given a name and are in motion, here there is a very attractive functionality offered by Google through which if the user searches for the name of an animal on the search engine, whether it is domestic, wild, exotic, marine, etc., he can receive and see that animal through the user's phone camera right in front of him, moving and making sounds specific to that animal. This can be a very attractive way to learn more about animals, in a fun and realistic way. Literature tells us that it has its shortcomings, and it is one of the highly disruptive innovations of the 21st century that has garnered the enormous attention of the global community (Burke & Ammara, 2023).

Methodology

The main goal of this study is to analyse the primary determinations regarding the factors that negatively and sometimes irreversibly affect language, way of thinking and implicitly the division of the creative elements that underlie a human being, especially from a social point of view. Artificial intelligence, for example, significantly contributes to diminishing creative power and essence, while simplifying language produces misunderstandings, barriers, and even problems. The method chosen in this study is content analysis on various aspects existing in the online environment, a space accessible to almost everyone, in which several dimensions will be analysed, such as themes and concepts, words and

expressions, posts and messages and digital behaviours. The analysis focuses on the online environment as a space for observation of the phenomena of language and creativity degradation.

Results and discussions

First, we showcase the number of "ChatGPT" searches in Romania and in the world, and we find out that 301.000 searches occurred in just one day (on the 16th of September, 2025), then we notice that the United States has the most searches, with 30.400.000, followed by India with 20.400.000 searches of this AI.

Figure 1. Searches of "ChatGPT" keyword on the SEMRush platform

(Source: SEMRush website tool for measuring searches)

AI-Generated Content in the Online Environment

Based on the analysis conducted in the online environment, we identified the following categories of content generated with artificial intelligence:

1. Social Media Content Generation Tools:

- ChatGPT Social Media Post Generator - generates posts for LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram;
- OwlyWriter AI (Hootsuite) - specializes in captions and posts for various platforms;
- Team-GPT AI Social Media Post Generator – optimized for multiple social media platforms;
- Buffer AI Content Creation Tools - 17 tools for content creation.

2. Practical Examples Identified:

- Generating 200 Posts in 10 Minutes Using ChatGPT and Canva;
- Complete automation of the content creation process for LinkedIn;
- Using AI to create YouTube thumbnails;
- Automatically generated posts from news articles.

3. Observed Trends:

- 82% of marketers report positive results using AI;
- 24% Increase in time spent on Meta platforms due to AI content;
- Over 20% of Facebook feed comes from sources unknown to the user.

In 2025, global adoption of AI continues to grow, with over 378 million people expected to use AI tools, a significant increase from previous years. Approximately 78% of organizations have integrated AI into their operations, with many now using it across three or more business functions. Within these companies, 53% of C-level leaders regularly use generative AI in the workplace, and in creative fields such as writing, over

half of users have integrated AI to assist them declared Kseniia Burmagina, the content manager of Elfsight: Marketing team.

Hikikomori, is translated as severe social withdrawal, and it originates and is found mostly in Japan. It is characterised by adolescents and young adults who become, willingly, isolated from social interaction, usually in their parents' homes, unable to work or even go to school for months and years on end. It is estimated that about half a million Japanese youths have become social recluses. It is said that there are two main reasons why *hikikomori* exists, or rather the triggering factors include mainly psychiatric conditions or social and cultural influences.

Hikikomori is frequently interpreted as a reaction to structural pressures in late-modern societies, including:

- Educational and occupational overregulation (e.g., Japan's exam-centered meritocracy).
- Neoliberal precarity and the erosion of stable employment pathways (Allison, 2013).
- Familial dependency structures, particularly within Japan's *ie* (家) system, which allows young adults to withdraw while remaining materially supported.

Sociologists like (Saito, 1998) and (Toivonen et al., 2011) argue that hikikomori reflects a *silent resistance* to hypercompetitive social norms rather than purely psychopathology.

The manifestation, location, and cause of hikikomori must be disclosed. It's also critical to comprehend the definition of hikikomori and its specific purpose. We can better understand this through literature, particularly from the social and medical fields. The phenomenon, whose importance cannot be understated because its numbers may grow significantly in the future. Conversely, although it originated in Japan and is primarily seen there, hikikomori has also been observed in the US, Sweden, India, and France. There are more than a million hikikomori in Japan as of 2021. Women are not always categorized as hikikomori because it is socially expected of them to take on and do domestic duties; therefore, their status as hikikomori may go ignored or unconcerned. Hikikomori makes up around 1.2% of Japan's population, although this number is predicted to rise sharply. It is said that hikikomori finds it challenging to use autonomous acts to effect positive change because they are unable to make sense of their solitary lives. However, certain groups do assist them in various regions. A group named Minotauro, for instance, supports Hikikomori in Milan, Italy; in reality, the amount of Hikikomori in Italy was estimated to reach the drastic number of over 50,000. Schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, adjustment disorders, and personality disorders are the most common mental illnesses among hikikomori. Hikikomori, or this solitary lifestyle choice, may have been influenced by several factors, including the previously mentioned numerous mental health issues, feelings of inadequacy, a lack of supportive friends in real life, or even the possibility that it may have resulted from increased consumption. Given that several NIH (National Library of Medicine) investigations evaluated and discovered that more than a quarter (26%) of the hikikomori examined suffer from social anxiety disorder, it is undeniably a mental illness. Saitō Tamaki, a prominent figure in Japan, psychiatrist and professor from Tsukuba According to Nippon.com, a Japanese university estimates that Japan could ultimately have 10 million hikikomori, which is concerning. It is to be expected that people age. Between the ages of 15 and 64, they will continue to live a reclusive life. According to some scholars, Nonaka, Takeda and Sakai, there is a significant risk of selection bias when studying hikikomori in general.

The main problem is that there is a declining language quality - using as many symbols and abbreviations as possible such as emojis or Animoji, specialized and even pejorative terms (ie *noob* – novice), exposure to false, unverified information – searching for

symptoms on the Internet, trusting false sources, the increasing vulnerability to which users are subjected.

Conclusions

Some recommendations and conclusions start from implementing filters designed to stop certain actions in the online environment that can lead to sensitive or even tragic/disastrous situations. Then, digital education with an emphasis on netiquette and cybersecurity. When approached with an emphasis on netiquette and cybersecurity, digital education extends beyond mere technical proficiency to include socio-ethical and safety dimensions of online participation, preparing learners not only to navigate but also to critically and responsibly inhabit digital spaces. Digital education refers to the systematic integration of digital tools, resources, and competencies into learning processes across all educational levels. It aims not only to develop technological proficiency but also to foster the responsible, ethical, and secure use of digital environments. When approached through the lenses of netiquette and cybersecurity, digital education expands its focus from operational skills to the cultivation of digital ethics, safety awareness, and civic responsibility in online spaces.

Netiquette, or network etiquette, refers to the conventions of respectful and responsible behaviour in online communication. It encompasses awareness of tone, clarity, empathy, and respect for diverse perspectives. Teaching netiquette helps learners understand the implications of their digital interactions, prevents the escalation of conflicts or cyberbullying, and promotes inclusivity in virtual settings. Within digital education, netiquette serves as a foundation for constructive digital dialogue, helping to sustain positive social relationships and professional communication in an increasingly connected world.

Educating yourself digitally is crucial for career advancement, personal safety, and navigating a modern world that is increasingly reliant on technology. It enhances professional opportunities, improves critical thinking and problem-solving, and empowers you to stay safe online by identifying scams and protecting personal data. Digital literacy also offers flexibility, allowing you to learn at your own pace, and enables better communication and collaboration in both professional and personal settings. Digital literacy can be helpful for many aspects of life, including professional life, personal life and social life. The accent must be put on social life because there are many cases of bullied children for example or adolescents that became bullies and started to harass others in online, especially in videogames. The digital literacy of children and young adults has gained more complexity to the point that many young generations understand each other through this virtual language, that is formed from signs and symbols and, of course, certain slang words. It is certain that new generations are born with internet usage skills, and they are digital natives. Especially since AI has started to become increasingly popular and it can pose as a double-edged sword. It can be productive, inspiring, helpful but also disastrous when it comes to the creative process. Since the COVID-19 outbreak everything digitalized drastically, starting from a forceful necessity to educate students to transforming the dormant digital brain into something more upgraded, but forcefully and instantly. This is where many companies started to emerge, such as Zoom, Google Meet that increased even more popularity, delivery apps such as Glovo, Wolt and Uber Eats and subscription-based services, such as Netflix, HBO Max, Amazon Prime, Disney+. All these combined services increased commodity, sedentary lifestyle and of course costs. It is simple to put in perspective the fact that a YouTube Premium subscription is cheap but combined with the others it increases the cost per month of such benefits, as well as increasing the need for these benefits constantly. In the end, it is important to educate ourselves and use tools as partners, not dependency.

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